Keen on Public Safety by Patty Prince

The City of Manassas and Prince William County are closely related in many ways. Prince William County surrounds the City of Manassas and shares some of the same services. However, there is one relationship that cannot be overlooked. That is the relationship of two brothers who serve as Chiefs in their localities. Chief of the Manassas City Police Department, Douglas Keen and Chief of the Prince William County Fire & Rescue Department, Timothy Keen are brothers.

I sat down with both chiefs to talk about how this could happen in one family and the answers are both heartwarming and a lot of fun. For this article’s purpose, we will have to use first names as both chiefs’ last names are Keen.

Growing up in a family of four (three boys and one girl), the boys tagged along with their father when he would go to help a neighbor in need. Mr. Keen, a welder, would fix a tractor or weld a backhoe back together. When the neighbor would reach a hand in his pocket to pay their dad, father Keen would always shake his head no and say, your thanks is enough. The boys saw their father’s gratification at doing the right and kind thing and that became a part of them. It was the undertone in their lives – service to others.

Both mom and dad Keen instilled in the boys a great work ethic. The Keens knew if they wanted something, they worked for it. During their teenage years, both Tim and Doug worked at Gossom’s Hardware Store in Haymarket in the afternoons and on weekends. The owner of the hardware store, Alan Gossom, was an influence in their lives. He trusted the then 14-year-old Doug and 16-year-old Tim to open the store on their own on weekends and handle the business for him like the adults they were trusted to be.

Another huge influence in the chiefs’ lives was Coach Phillip Harrover. Coach Harrover had both Keen boys in sports and taught them sportsmanship among other life skills. One of the biggest take-aways from Coach Harrover that Doug remembers, and uses with his kids today, is that if you want to perform better than the person next to you, then when everyone works out for two hours, you need to work out for three or more. Tim remembers and to this day tells his staff to find a person that you admire and respect and see that they do things the right way and ask them to be your mentor.

As a 19-year-old, Tim walked into the Gainesville Fire Station to volunteer with his big brother Jeff and fell in love. The Fire & Rescue bug had bitten him. He knew that one day he would be a fire fighter. Younger brother, Doug, had been bitten by another bug, but still in public safety. However, while he waited to turn 21 so that he could go to the Police Academy, he begrudgingly admits that he also volunteered at the Gainesville Fire Station. It was fun to volunteer with his big brothers.

“It’s got to be part of our DNA,” said Chief Doug Keen. “From a young age we knew we wanted to be in public safety.”

It is in their blood. It is what drives them. Public Service, service to the community is what makes these brothers happy. As a matter of fact, Tim’s son is in the Prince William Police Academy and Doug’s son is talking about working towards a form of public service as well. It’s in the DNA.

One day, after both had been promoted to a certain level in their careers, not quite to chiefs, the brothers looked at each other and said that the day they both became chiefs in their fields they would throw a big party. Well, the day has come, but the party did not happen. Instead of the big party, these two went to work in the communities that they love.

“You’ve got two brothers sitting here (pointing to his brother Doug) and he’ll say he’s got the greatest job in the world, and (pointing to himself) I’ll say I’ve got the greatest job in the world,” said Chief Tim Keen. “How often can you say that?”

“How many people get to come to work in their home town, to be blessed, to still enjoy it, and it is what we want to do and we still have an impact on both the organization and the community?” asked Chief Doug Keen. “It’s like Christmas morning every day.”
One of the questions that I hear a lot in Northern Virginia is where do you live? The question is often asked to determine how long it takes you to drive to work or get to a particular place or event. It is amazing how daily commutes dominate discussions in this area.

This question also has more meaning here than in other parts of the country as Virginia is relatively unique in how local government is structured. One thing we share with many places is that our zip codes are not reflective of our actual jurisdiction. If you are reading this you very likely live in the City of Manassas and have a Manassas 20110 zip code. Otherwise you probably have a business in the City.

For every City resident, however, there are also about three people who have a Manassas zip code who do not actually live in the City. Many of these folks work, shop, eat, attend events and worship in the City and consider themselves “Manassas” residents. Whether we live in the City or just have a Manassas address, together we form an economic engine providing a base for manufacturing, technology, health services and tourism in this region.

We refer to this combined area as “the Greater Manassas region” although based on Virginia statutory law you are either a resident of an independent city (i.e. the City of Manassas) or you are a resident of a County. Towns, like Haymarket and Dumfries, are classified differently and residents there live in both a town and a county. For census purposes Manassas is considered a separate county which gives me the opportunity to again emphasize the importance of filling out your census forms before April 1st.

This also leads to the point that as a city (or a town or county) we can only do what the Virginia state statutes expressly give us permission to do. With the current General Assembly now in session, this means that we must be monitoring what laws are being considered that will either give us authority to do things that citizens are asking us to do or more likely what laws are being considered to take away authority and further restrict the ability of your locally elected officials to take particular actions.

While a few state legislative items tend to dominate the news cycles every session, there are thousands of bills that are introduced each year. City Council has adopted a legislative program that encourages the General Assembly to support economic development and job creation; improve transportation funding particularly for Route 28 and VRE service; improve state funding for education mandates; support public safety efforts particularly related to mental health and addiction, allow for local authority in determining land use decisions, maintain diverse revenue sources to reduce the reliance on property taxes, and investment in infrastructure.

So next time you are asked, “where do you live?”, I hope that you will reply with pride that you live in the City of Manassas and encourage that person to come and see all we have to offer in our wonderful City.

PUBLIC NOTICE TO CITY OF MANASSAS RESIDENTS

Voter Registration Information for:
The March 3, 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Election:

- The last day to register to vote in the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election will be Monday, February 10, 2020 at 5 p.m., online 11:59 p.m.
- The office will be open for “In-Person” Absentee Voting Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. beginning Friday, January 17 and one Saturday before the Election, February 29, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Last day to request an Absentee Ballot by mail is Tuesday, February 25, 2020 by 5 p.m.
- Final “In-Person” Absentee Voting is Saturday, February 29, 2020.
- Tuesday, March 3, 2020 Election Day. Polls open 6 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Susan N. Reed, Director of Elections & General Registrar
City of Manassas * Old Town Hall Building * 9025 Center Street *Manassas, Virginia  20110
703-257-8230
Pawsative Enforcement

Recently, some unusual visitors began stopping by the pre-shift briefings Manassas City Police Officers attend each day. These furry four-legged friends are members of the Manassas Therapy Dogs. The volunteers of Manassas Therapy Dogs and their K9 companions are a part of a new wellness initiative aimed at providing support to MCPD staff members.

In addition to boosting morale, their presence before or after shifts and after critical incidents help to reduce stress and improve overall well-being. Research shows that spending time with a therapy dog can reduce stress and provide a sense of connection in difficult situations.

Recycling News

Rinse - Recycle - Repeat

It is really important to rinse out recyclable containers before putting them into the recycling container. In single-stream recycling, all of the materials collected are separated out at the material recovery facility. Because materials come into contact with one another in these streams, it is more likely that liquids and foods will spill onto paper products. This can contaminate paper and force the recycling facility to divert the product to the landfill. Rinsing out bottles and cans reduces the likelihood that recycled materials will be sent to the trash. Soap and scrubbing are not required, but taking a moment to give them a rinse, even if it is just with dishwater runoff, will ensure that they end up getting processed. Rinsing also reduces odors and prevents pests from getting into the containers.

Drop-off Days start in March

Curbside recycling is only one of the ways our community recycles. We also have scheduled drop-off days at the Manassas Transfer Station nine days a year. The City accepts paint, chemicals from pools, home and garden, electronics, and documents for shredding. Visit the website for more information at www.manassascity.org/trash. 2020 Drop Off Days:

- March 7
- April 4
- May 2 + Shredding
- June 6
- July 11
- August 1 + Shredding
- September 5
- October 3
- November 7 + Shredding

A word about yard waste …

As we make our way toward the garden and start planning for spring, please remember that there are rules for setting out yard waste for collection.

- Yard waste can go in private containers or paper yard waste bags
- No yard waste in plastic bags will be collected.
- Branches and brush must be bundled and tied.
- Fallen tree limbs and branches over 4 feet in length and 3 inches in diameter will not be collected.
- No compost, dirt, sand, or stone will be collected

Please set yard waste out at the curb on Sunday night for collection on Monday. For more information, visit www.manassascity.org/trash or call the Trashline at (703) 257-8252.

Great American Cleanup happens March 21 – May 31
Help us cleanup Manassas

As a Keep America Beautiful Affiliate, Keep Manassas Beautiful is part of the country’s largest community cleanup program. This national program engages more than 1.5 million volunteers and participants who take action in their communities every year to create positive change and lasting impact. By becoming a Keep Manassas Beautiful Volunteer, your participation will help the City of Manassas start sprucing up for spring! Last year, volunteers shared over 1,000 hours of their time and collected more than 1.5 tons of litter from our parks, streets and public spaces.

Want to take part?

The City of Manassas provides litter pickers, vests, trash bags and a little gift to show our appreciation - all you need to do is give an hour of your time between March 21 and May 31. Clean up your adopted street, park or public space and report your activity through our website: www.manassascity.org/kmb.
Harris Pavilion Skating
Regular hours (weather permitting):
Wednesday-Thursday, 3 - 8 p.m.; Friday
3 - 10 p.m.; Saturday, 12 - 10 p.m.; Sunday,
12 - 7 p.m. - Weekly Events include: Rock
the Rink: Saturdays, 8 - 10 p.m.; Free Skate,
Wednesdays: 3 - 8 p.m. ($6 skate rentals,
free skating); and $6 Matinee Skate on
Thursdays: 3 - 6 p.m. (includes skate rental)
Learn to Skate sessions: ($80 per session per
person) Extended holiday hours: February
13, 12 Noon – 8 p.m. February 14, 12 Noon
– 10 p.m., and February 17, 12 Noon – 8 p.m.
Visit www.harrispavilion.com or call
703-403-8297 for more information.

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First Friday
March 6, 6-9 p.m. - Exhibit at the Manassas Museum
Artistic Expressions - Osbourn High School
March 5, 6 p.m. - Opening Reception -
Museum Stories - at the Manassas Museum
March 8, 8 p.m. – Metropolitan Jazz
Orchestra at Hylton Performing Arts Center
Feb. 8 - March 27 - Yemonja Smalls’ solo
exhibit “It’s Complicated”
Feb. 8, 10 - 11:30 a.m. - Native Legacy
Family Workshop at the Manassas Museum
Feb. 10, 7:30 p.m. - Comprehensive Plan
Update City Council public hearing
continued; City Hall Council Chambers
Feb. 12, 3 p.m. - Stories in Preservation and
Progress: Chief Emeritus John Lightner
at the Manassas Museum
Feb. 14 - Valentine’s Day holiday
Feb. 15, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. - Genealogy
Workshop: African American Ancestry
at the Manassas Museum
Feb. 15 – Virginia National Ballet: Cinderella
at Hylton Performing Arts Center
Feb. 17 - Presidents Day holiday
Feb. 20, 4:30-6:30 p.m. - at the Manassas
Museum - Evening for Educators: African
American History in Manassas
Feb. 23, 1:30 p.m. - Free Book Talk - Second
Manassas: Longstreet’s Attack and the
Struggle for Chinn Ridge with Author Scott
Patchan at the Manassas Museum
Feb. 28, 10 a.m. - Museum Stories, family
program with hands-on activity
March 5, 6 p.m. - Opening Reception -
Artistic Expressions - Osbourn High School
Exhibit at the Manassas Museum
March 6, 6-9 p.m. - First Friday

Visit the City at www.manassascity.org.
www.facebook.com/cityofmanassas
www.twitter.com/cityofmanassas
www.flickr.com/photos/cityofmanassas
www.instagram.com/cityofmanassas
www.youtube.com/user/manassascityva
To contact the City of Manassas Connection
newsletter, email pprince@manassasva.gov